



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/44/151
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CONFIDENTIAL

POC/1  
RA. SDLP  
- 2/6/81

Conversations with Hume, Mallon and General Secretary of SDLP

John Hume

1. Hume in recent days has been extremely agitated about reports/rumours that the Secretary of State may be considering offering Unionists a possible suspension of the Conference and some concession on the Secretariat. He doubts if all that Brooke has in mind is a limited gap between two Conference meetings, since the NIO must be aware that Paisley is very unlikely to accept such a formula.
2. Hume went on to say that the SDLP at grassroots level are becoming very concerned about a situation developing where the Agreement could, albeit inadvertently, end up being undermined. He said he is determined therefore to tell the British that, if suspension or any interference with the Secretariat is in question, the SDLP will not be prepared to enter into talks. He fully realises the public opinion dangers of such a stance, particularly given his developing suspicion that a number of prominent political figures in the South believe that the SDLP attitude is now a major obstacle to talks getting underway - and that the party is seeking to influence the Government here into adopting a similar approach. (Note: While Hume's concern is entirely genuine, I would think it unlikely that, in the event, he will state his position in quite such blunt terms to the Secretary of State).
3. He is also apprehensive and perplexed about the sense of urgency being shown by the NIO. They, for instance, have been putting extreme pressure on him to meet the Secretary of State on Friday week (16th February). This will presumably be after Brooke's planned meeting with Paisley and Molyneux. Hume believes that the British are moving forward without any clear idea of where they are going and, even more importantly, any sense or understanding of core

Unionist thinking. As of now, Hume intends putting off the meeting with Brooke for as long as possible. He wants to avoid a situation where - as with the Convention some years ago - the Northern parties could find themselves tied up with "six months of nonsense", and with no possibility of progress being achieved.

Seamus Mallon

4. Mallon, whom I met in Armagh on Tuesday evening, is equally suspicious and worried about British intentions. He emphasised that there was no possibility of devolved Government being achieved in the North within the next five or perhaps even ten years. The Unionists were simply not prepared to make the concessions necessary to allow progress to be made. But even if they were, it was impossible to see how devolution could be sustained against a background where the security forces - including the police - had next to no credibility, or legitimacy, in nationalist eyes. Security in short was, in his view, the fundamental obstacle to any attempt to establish devolution. (Note: Despite Mallon's private view, he is on the record in Westminster at the end of November making what could be construed - and is being so construed, and indeed widely quoted, by the British - as a strong statement in favour of devolution; relevant extracts from the statement are attached).

Patsy McGlone

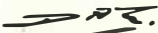
5. As reported previously, McGlone, the General Secretary of the SDLP, has recently had a number of discussions with his Unionist opposite number, Jim Wilson. At a meeting earlier this week, Wilson gave the following summary of Molyneux's present thinking about the prospects for talks:

- there was no question of inter-party talks (in

particular at leadership level) being "around the corner"; much more work would need to be done before these could be envisaged; and

- part of this preliminary work could take the form of inter-party cooperation on issues such as Shorts and the European Community; such cooperation would, in Molyneaux's view, be helpful in conditioning people into accepting that the party leaders might get together at a later stage.

6. Finally, Wilson said that Jim Molyneaux hoped the SDLP would become involved in the work of the Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland (Molyneaux's thinking here is that, by showing the British that there can be close cooperation across party lines between Councillors, London might be tempted to go along with Unionist proposals for the extension of Local Government powers. In Molyneaux's eyes, this would be a far more welcome and safer development than devolved central Government). The SDLP however are extremely wary of this approach, both because of the behaviour of many Unionist controlled Councils - especially Belfast - and the general perception in the North that increased local authority powers would constitute a significant step on the road to integration.



Dermot Gallagher,  
8 February, 1990.

cc: PST; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Mathews; Mr. Brosnan;  
Counsellors A-I; Box

Extracts from Mallon's Speech, House of Commons,

22 November 1989

... At present we have a system where others decide whether more or less power should be given to the North of Ireland. Others determine what economic policies will be pursued in the Province and under what type of economic restraints it will operate. Others decide who will close schools and factories and cut social security benefits. That is not an enticing scenario as many will testify. Others decide what is expedient and just and in many ways, what is life and what is death. Others decide what we shall or shall not get and what we shall not give, especially in terms of the EEC.

The political parties from the North of Ireland should enter into proper substantial negotiations and face with courage the reality that our economic and environmental problems and the violence in the North of Ireland will not be solved in this House. We are and we shall remain optional extras here. We have it within our power to get to grips with that problem. ... We should start to negotiate.

... The elected representatives of the people of the North of Ireland must be asked what powers we should like to operate on behalf of the people of the North of Ireland. We must ask for a fiscal relationship between the North of Ireland and Great Britain which will allow us to implement the type of rejuvenation programmes that are needed by a society which has been through the trauma of in effect 20 years of war. We must be allowed to decide what structure is suitable for a unique political situation, rather than ape unsuitable structures. Above all, we must be allowed to take on board the whole problem of security, policing, violence and justice.

The people of the North of Ireland will need the courage and will-power to take on and examine those four areas closely and

talk them through. The people of the North of Ireland must stand on their own feet and show that we can be sturdy, independent Ulstermen, rather than whinge to Ministers for a little more when we are getting a little less. We should start to take action to resolve the problems, instead of whingeing that nobody will do it for us.

...The solution is for the political parties in the North of Ireland to start to talk and then to have their own forum, administration and means of making decisions rather than going through the present subterfuge of pursuing integration while running away from the reality that we could have our administration .....